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H.A.C.O. LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO ATTACK IDENTITY CRISIS

As part of our continuing effort to rid ourselves of attitudes and behavior that are individually and collectively self-destructive, the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization is moving to develop a systematic program of identity examination. What do we mean by "identity examination"? We mean that we, as African people, like any other people, have an identity, one which is manifested by us individually and as we act as a group. We believe that it is one's sense of identity which determines, to a large extent, how one interacts with the world and how one acts in relation to his or her own interests.

For example, if a child is raised by his or her parents to identify him or herself as a bird, eventually that child will attempt to fly. Let us imagine the parents taking this child up to the roof of their home for his or her first flight lessons. The resulting contusions, abrasions, and probable broken bones would comprise what we would call "child-abuse."

Like the child in this hypothetical and ludicrous situation, we humans are not birds. This being so, if any of us desire to fly, we would do well to get aboard a plane. Being human, there are certain capabilities that accompany us into the first light of birth. Identifying ourselves as human, we try to do the things which we understand humans are capable of doing. We walk, speak, think, and otherwise act according to our identity as humans.

Ideally, humans would all be, very simply, just humans, sharing the same interests, goals, aspirations, and so forth. Unfortunately, the lives we live are not ideal but real. Human-kind is separated into almost innumerable categories, categories which are frequently thrown into competition against each other for resources, power, prominence, and other spoils.

In our present world, we African folks are profoundly embroiled in a multi-faceted battle in which white racism, neo-colonialism, class and caste systems and other such foes impede our progress and often threaten our very existence. Because it is our physical/identifiable Africanness which frequently marks us for attack, it is vital understand that there is strength in numbers and power in unity. In other words, it is that very thing--our Africanness--which makes us vulnerable which can simultaneously be the source of our strength.

When we identify with our Africanness, we act with and for those things we perceive as being in our collective African interests. On the other hand, when we, either consciously or unconsciously, deny or disregard our African identity, we act <u>against</u> our own interests and <u>for</u> the interests of those whose practice and/or design it is to hold us in some form or other of subservience.

In a speech delivered by Ernest Chambers during the height of the Jackson campaign in Omaha, Coretta Scott King and Andrew

Young were referred to as "Aunt Coretta" and "Uncle Andy"--clear allusion to African-American symbols of betrayal, Aunt Jemima and Uncle Tom. At a meeting of the Black Caucus, during the recent Democratic Convention, these same two people were booed by fellow-African people. In both these instances, King and Young were subjected to ridicule because of their support for a Caucasian politician over Jesse Jackson and the feeling on the part of the persons doing the ridiculing that King's and Young's rejection of Jesse Jackson constituted a betrayal of the interests of the U.S.' African population.

Why would Ernie Chambers and other African folks view King's and Young's support of Walter Mondale, particularly, during the period prior to the nomination of the Democratic presidential candidate, as an act of betrayal? Several reasons could be cited, among them, the following: 1-Aside from the fact that Jackson is African, the views expressed and plans offered by him during his campaign clearly represented, in contrast to the vague and tepid views and "promises" of Mondale, the interests of African people. 2-The Jackson presidential bid was marked by an unprecedented(in recent years) show of unity on the part of African people in the U.S., one deserving of the participation of all of us. 3-The history of the relationship between the Republican and Democratic Parties and African people has been one of consistent disregard and/or betrayal of our interests, and the Jackson candidacy provided an excellent opportunity for African people to put the political establishment on notice that the support from African people could no longer be obtained for political "pennies."

The rejection of Jackson by Uncle Andy and Aunt Coretta serves as a prime example of African people identifying, not with the Africanness they share with the rest of us, but with, in a contemporary sense, "the slave-master." We saw another variation on this theme when, in their interviews with the press, Guy Buford(the first African in space) and Vanessa Williams(the now-defrocked Miss America) practically broke their respective necks to explain how they were Americans who only "happened to be black."

But we need not go to nationally known African folks in this country to find instances of African people, in some important sense, denying/rejecting their Africanness and lining themselves up on the side of "the slave-master." We can look in our own neighborhoods, next door, in our own households, in ourselves and find innumerable manifestations of this characteristic of so many of us. The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization sees these manifestations here in the prison, with African prisoners trying to run game on each other, verbally putting each other down for darkness of skin or thickness of lips, subjecting each other to physical violence without just cause.

In order to attempt to bring about a change in the minds and spirits of our members and of the other African folks with whom we come into contact, we have begun a series of educational programs at our meetings in which we are trying to instill in our members and guests knowledge and understanding of our African identity, an informed and sincere acceptance of this identity, and a sense of loyalty to collective African interests.

Our first two programs in this series have addressed the issue of names, how it is that most of us have names which identify us as European. In the first program, one of our members, Shakur, gave a presentation on how we came to receive our European names, the psychological impacts of having them, and why we should consider ridding ourselves of them. In the second program, which was conducted on the 31st. of July, Dr. Oyeken Owomoyela(a Yoruba from Nigeria and presently teaching at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln) spoke to us about traditional naming practices in Africa, the significance of names, and answered a wide range of questions about African history and religion.

We urge our Brothers and Sisters on the outside to offer your knowledge and

understanding to our effort to change minds and spirits. We encourage you to learn with us.

--the editor

H. A. C. O. BOARD SELECTION COMPLETED

As previously reported, the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization held elections. Alchico Wilson and Ezra Wright were elected Chairman and Sergeant-at-Arms, respectively. The H.A.C.O. constitution provides that the other members of the executive board be appointed by the Chairman. These appointments have been made and are as follows:

Treasurer-Ajabu(Alan Hardin)
Secretary-Lawrence Atwater
Admin. Chairman-Michael Sturgeon
Education Chairman-Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(David Rice)

NEW MALONE CENTER DIRECTOR

(This interview was conducted with Matthew Stelley on August 2nd., during his first week as director of the Malone Community Center in Lincoln.)

Editor: Matthew, under your directorship, what will the primary function of the Malone Center be?

Matthew: Our prime function will be to expand present social, educational, and cultural activities. There needs to be more offered.

Editor: More specifically, what kinds of activities are you talking about?

Matthew: There will be more emphasis on education than on recreation. Recreation should be a reward for kids coming into the center, not the main attraction for bringing them in.

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Editor: What will be your main thrust in regards education?

Matthew: Cultural awareness. We must culturally reeducate people in the community. Classes in Black Studies will be the number-one priority. I want to see more field trips. Our kids should be able to see Ernie in action in the legislature, be introduced to Black students and Black programming on the campus, and so forth. Our children should be trained for more than just being gladiators(football-players, etc.).

Editor: Will the center make use of inter-cultural contact between African-born and American-born Africans in order to further the goal of increased cultural awareness.

Matthew: First we have to do things to attract people to the center and it is the function of the Black Studies courses we will be offering to bring about this awareness.

(At this point, the editor, Matthew Stelley, and Buddy Hogan entered into a general exploration of the kinds of formal and informal programs which could be made use of, including interaction between Africans from Africa and U.S.-born Africans, to assist in the achieving the goal of cultural awareness.)

To submit articles of news, opinions, poetry, etc. to the FLAME, send to:

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68502-0500

If you wish to attend a Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization meeting, call 471-3161(ext. 379) and ask for William Roundey or send us a letter.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Mozambique Fights Economic Squeeze

"Mozambique is gearing up to revive its stricken economy and has delayed general elections until mid-1985 to do so. Elections already had been put off for two years. A recently approved government budget calls for 'iron discipline' in carrying out austerity measures that include a further cutback in the use of imported fuels and a rationalization of the workforce. The state will concentrate its resources on enterprises that can produce to capacity, either for export or to substitute for imports. The plan calls for concentration on the export of tea, cotton, and cashews, and on cereals and other food crops for domestic consumption. Many austerity measures in the 1984 plan appeared in last year's plan, and others, such as a cutback on foreign workers, have been implemented. No full budget was published, but the Council of Ministers indicates that the deficit will be $170 million."

--from page 54 of the August edition of WORLD PRESS REVIEW

The Dikko Kidnapping

"A bizarre kidnapping scandal erupted July 5 after British police went to Stansted airport and opened two crates being shipped here(Lagos, Nigeria) by the Nigerian Embassy in London. Inside were found a former Nigerian government official, drugged and unconscious, and three Israelis. The Nigerian, Umaru Dikko, transport minister in the government of deposed Nigerian president Shehu Shagari, had been snatched earlier in the day from outside the luxurious London house where he lived.

"The case, which has yet to come to trial, has seriously strained British-Nigerian relations. It has also embarrassed this country's 7-month-old military regime, already staggering under the problems of massive inflation, pressures to repay an enormous foreign debt, and growing internal opposition to military rule and curbs on press freedom.

"As one of the most powerful men in the government of his brother-in-law Shagari, Dikko is known to have received kickbacks on construction projects and is widely seen here as the personification of official corruption. Corruption trials, which have awarded stiff prison sentences to a number of former government officials, including eight state governors, have been one of the most popular acts of the Supreme Military Council(SMC) which assumed power after a coup earlier this year. In addition, the present Nigerian government has accused Dikko of plotting a counter-coup in Britain and the U.S. with South African backing. Earlier this year Dikko organized an exiles' conference in New York, and from Britain he has called on Nigerians to stage a popular uprising.

"The most puzzling aspect of the case is the involvement of the Israelis, who are being held by British police along with a Nigerian diplomat. The Tel Aviv daily Davar, quoting sources among the British police, says two of the Israelis had been hired on behalf of a U.S.-owned construction firm doing business in Nigeria. The Nigerian government, according to this account, had asked the construction firm to help abduct Dikko. However, given the increasingly close ties between the Israeli government and the Nigerian military, it seems more likely that the assignment of Israelis to the Dikko job was made in Tel Aviv rather than New York.

"British members of parliament are calling on their government to break off diplomatic relations with Nigeria, and Britain has already expelled thre Nigerian diplomats. However, British economic interests in this country may curb further action..."

--excerpted from an article on page 17 of the July 25 edition of THE GUARDIAN

POETRY

Seven(days) to yesterday I have not seen the sister,[1]
And a sickness has invaded me;
My body has become heavy,
(And I am)forgetful of my own self.
If the chief physicians come to me,
My heart is not content with their remedies...
What will revive me is to say to me: "Here she is!"
Her name is what will lift me up...
The sister is more beneficial to me than any remedies;
She is more to me than the collected writings.
My health is her coming in from outside.

As for the heated man of a temple,
He is like a tree growing in the open.
In the completion of a moment (comes) its loss of foliage,
And its end is reached in the shipyards;
Or it is floated far from its place,
And the flame is its burial-shroud.

But the truly silent man holds himself apart.
He is like a tree growing in a garden.
It flourishes and doubles its yield;
It (stands) before its lord.
Its fruit is sweet, its shade is pleasant,
And its end is reached in the garden.

This African literature is from Egypt and was, according to the work(THE CULTURE OF ANCIENT EGYPT by John A. Wilson) from which these two poems have been taken, written during the 18th.-20th. dynasties(about 1325-1100 B.C.).

1 - According to Wilson, the terms "sister" and "brother," when used in romantic poems of this period, refer to loved ones.

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Some African Poets in the U.S.

Inua Alameen	Etheridge Knight	Gwendolyn Brooks
Haki Madhubuti	Ted Joans	Ray Fleming
Naomi Andrews	Linda Cousins	Louis Rivera
Ntozake Shange	Nikki Giovanni	Sonia Sanchez
Dudley Randall	.....a salute to these and other creators.	

INTRODUCTION

Most black Americans, if they could trace their national origins back to West Africa, would discover that they are of Yoruba heritage, from Nigeria. This is because more than half of the Yoruba (Yo-roo-bah) population of 8 million were brought to the Americas as slaves. One of the first things to happen when a Yoruba landed on American soil was the changing of his or her name. Intelligent and meaningful names such as Sanjulo (the finest) or Ajile (gift to our town) were changed to such meaningless European names as Henry or Phyllis. Because of this evil practice most Afro-Americans today have false names. And so millions of newborn children who are of African descent begin life with a split personality by being saddled with a name which is of European descent. We hope more thinking, sensitive Afro-American parents will put an end to this old slavery-time habit by giving their new babies a proud, culturally harmonious beginning.

When a child was born to our forefathers, it was given a name on its' 8th day. The entire family was present, and the baby was washed in herbs, (omi-ewe), and dressed in white. Prayers, offerings and songs were made for the ancestors, and their names were called. A drink of water or rum was poured, and a candle was lit for their spirits. Prayers, songs, offerings of fruit, food or sacrificed livestock were then made to the patron Orisha-Vudu (Saint) of the household. Praise names (Oriki) were suggested by anyone, until the parents selected one. Next, the oruko (spiritual name was given to thank the patron Orisha. If a Priest was present, a "reading" would be taken to reveal the child's character and destiny. Now the infant received a touch of salt, honey, palm oil, and water in its' mouth. All of the men and all of the women then held the baby and vowed to protect and help raise it. Dancing and singing began.

AFRICAN NAMES

From The Ancient Yoruba Kingdom Of Nigeria

By Oba Oseijeman Adefunmi
King Of Oyotunji Yoruba Village,
Dean Of The Yoruba Academy

GREAT BENIN BOOKS